

H.R. 4482, Southwest Border Security Threat Assessment Act of 2016, as amended

FLOOR SITUATION

On Wednesday, April 13, 2016, the House will consider [H.R. 4482](#), the Southwest Border Security Threat Assessment Act of 2016. The bill was introduced on February 4, 2016, by Rep. Martha McSally (R-AZ) and was referred to the Committee on Homeland Security, which ordered the bill reported, as amended, by voice vote, on March 23, 2016.

SUMMARY

H.R. 4482 directs the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security to submit a threat analysis of the southwest border to Congress 180 days after enactment. The analysis shall include: an assessment of current and potential terrorism and criminal threats posed by individuals and organizations seeking to exploit border security vulnerabilities; an assessment of improvements needed between ports of entry to prevent terrorists and instruments of terror from entering the United States; an assessment of gaps in law, policy, and cooperation between state, local, or tribal law enforcement, international agreements, or tribal agreements that hinder effective and efficient border security; an assessment of the current percentage of situational awareness achieved by the Department of Homeland Security of the international land and maritime borders of the United States; and an assessment of the current percentage of operational control achieved by the Department. The bill directs the Secretary to consider technology and personnel needs and challenges, as well as the roles and authorities and the need for cooperation between State, local, and tribal law enforcement in border security activities.

In addition, H.R. 4482 directs the Chief of the Border Patrol to issue a Border Patrol Strategic Plan, updated every five years. The plan shall include a threat assessment of the southwest border, efforts to increase situational awareness, efforts to detect, prevent, and interdict terrorists, aliens, and illicit drugs, the technology required to enhance security efforts, staffing requirements for border security functions, and efforts to increase the flow of information between Federal law enforcement entities, state, local, and tribal authorities, and border community stakeholders, including representatives from agricultural and ranching organizations and business and civic organizations along the border.

BACKGROUND

Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is one of the world's largest law enforcement agencies with more than 60,000 employees. The agency is charged with facilitating lawful international travel and trade, and takes a comprehensive approach to border management and control, customs, immigration, border security, agricultural protection, and thwarting terrorism.¹

In May 2012, the U.S. Border Patrol released an updated five-year strategic plan for 2012-2016, which has not previously been updated since 2004. According to the Border Patrol leadership, the 2012-2016 Plan marked a shift in focus from being "resource-based" to "risk-based".² However, CBP continues to face evolving challenges and threats from drug cartels, large populations of migrants and child migrants looking to cross the border, and international terrorist organizations taking advantage of border security vulnerabilities.

According to the Committee, the updated strategy lacks critical elements for the Border Patrol to gauge its success. In 2010, the agency stopped reporting the miles under "operational control," a key metric used to evaluate performance. The Committee feels a new strategic plan is necessary to address the evolving threats at the borders, and one that accounts for technology as well as lessons learned so CBP can accomplish its mission in the most effective and efficient manner.

According to the bill's sponsor, "The threats along our border have shifted significantly in the last few years, let alone over the last two decades. Our Border Patrol can't do their job if they're operating off of outdated information[...]. A periodic threat assessment of the Southern Border is definitely in order given the dynamic and changing nature of border criminal activity."³

COST

A Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimate is currently unavailable.

STAFF CONTACT

For questions or further information please contact [Jake Vreeburg](#) with the House Republican Policy Committee by email or at 5-0190.

¹ See <http://www.cbp.gov/about>

² See "[2012-2016 Border Patrol Strategic Plan](#)" at 2.

³ See Rep. Martha McSally's Press Release "[U.S. Rep. McSally Calls for New Assessment of Southern Border Threats](#)"